

How to Make the Most of Special Time with Your Child [Checklist]

Parents are busy, stressed, and under a lot of pressure to do way too many things at once. This can make it really hard to spend the kind of relaxed, warm, attentive time with your child that all children need to develop well. Use this Special Time Checklist to make the most of your time with your child. You will build connection and give your child confidence to learn and grow and enjoy healthy lifelong relationships.

- **Name it.** You don't have to call it "Special Time" but call it something so that you and your child both have a name for this important time together.
- **Set a Date.** Let your child know ahead of time when Special Time is going to happen, whether it's just a few minutes away or not until next weekend.
- **Use a Timer.** It's very important to have an 'outside' source calling time when your Special Time with your child is over. The buzzer or beep of the cell phone allows you and your child to be free of watching the clock while enjoying your time together.
- **Remember that during Special Time the child is in charge.** Show your child the enthusiastic cooperation, openness, and flexibility you hope your child will show the rest of the day. Short of true danger, and within the limits of time and finances, allow your child to try and do whatever it is they would like. Go along. And follow the laughter as much as possible.
- **Let go of your agenda.** Set everything else aside and don't let anything interrupt this precious encounter. For these 5, or 10, or 30 minutes, don't answer the door, don't check your messages, don't clean up anything, don't let your mind wander, just be with your child. Enjoy your child. Learn something new about your child and the way he sees the world. Focus and be present and don't teach.
- **One child at a time.** Special Time works best one on one, though two adults could cooperate to give one child Special Time together. But there's no way for one parent to be fully focused on more than one child at a time. If you need to, start small. [Find a way](#) to carve out at least 5 minutes a couple times a week with each child and build from there. You'll be amazed what your child can do with 5 minutes of your focused attention.
- **Respect the timer and let Special Time end.** If some disappointment comes up when Special Time with your child ends, tell him when it will happen again and let him know how much you look forward to your next Special Time. If big feelings come up for your child, take that opportunity to listen to whatever your child needs to share [while holding the limit](#) that Special Time is done for now.